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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0229

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAKU 000514

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DEPT FOR U/S BURNS, EUR DAS BRYZA, DRL A/S LOWENKRON AND PM
ACTING A/S MULL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/26/2022

TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM PBTS AM AJ

SUBJECT: AZERBAIJANI GOVERNMENT WELCOMES RETURN TO ORIGINAL
2006 ARMENIA HRR LANGUAGE; PLEDGES TO AVOID NEGATIVE IMPACT
ON PEACE PROCESS

REF: ROOD/DERSE EMAIL OF 4/25/07

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Jason P. Hyland per 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (U) This is an action message; see para 6.

¶2. (C) Per ref instructions, the Ambassador spoke to President Aliyev on the morning of April 26 and informed him that the Department had restored the original NK text in the 2006 Armenia Human Rights Report. The Ambassador underscored our great need to work together in how we play this to avoid any negative impact on the peace talks. Aliyev agreed. He said, "This is very good, very positive. Talk to Elmar (Foreign Minister Mammadyarov) about joint steps we can take right away to not waste time, to turn the page and continue as we were before." In response to the Ambassador's question as to whether we could proceed to reschedule the security talks, Aliyev said, "Definitely, if the original text is restored." The Ambassador assured him that the language had been restored. Aliyev said, "I will instruct Elmar to identify concrete dates that work for you because I can send our delegation anytime." The Ambassador noted that she had been approached by the press at a public event this morning and had said only that our policy with respect to the NK conflict and the status of NK has not changed, and that we had restored the original text of the 2006 Armenia Human Rights Report.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador then spoke to Foreign Minister Mammadyarov, and underscored the crucial need for us to work together on how we play this to avoid negative impact on the peace talks. The Ambassador relayed to Mammadyarov her message to the press that morning. Mammadyarov agreed that we need to work together on managing this issue, and said he would work on their side to "calm down the situation." Mammadyarov asked that we identify as soon as possible dates for the security talks, emphasizing that the Azerbaijani delegation is ready to go. The Ambassador and Mammadyarov will meet tomorrow, April 27, for a strategy session to ensure this incident does not have a negative impact on the NK peace process.

¶4. (C) In a separate April 26 conversation, Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov also confirmed to the Ambassador that Azerbaijan will take a low-key approach to the changed Human Rights Report language. Assuring the Ambassador that the GOAJ "will not beat the drums," Azimov previewed the points he planned to make to the press and told the Ambassador he hoped to set new dates for the security talks as soon as possible. (Lower-level officials in Azimov's office separately told us that he would like the talks to take place

in May if possible.)

¶15. (SBU) We are still awaiting the general media reaction to the news that the Department had restored the original NK text in the 2006 Armenia Human Rights Report. As of 1700 local time, Foreign Minister Mammadyarov has been the only official to comment on the development. He defended the GOAJ's sharp response to the original change in an interview with local television stations and noted, with some satisfaction, that the decision to reverse it was "significant." The news has already been picked up by some local blogs and web forums where the initial responses have been joyful. Some blog postings, however, have sounded a more cautious note, pointing to the differences between the language in the report and statements made by DAS Bryza in a recent VOA interview. Some more suspicious-minded types have written postings reminding others that the US continues to provide direct assistance to Nagorno-Karabakh and asking what price Azerbaijan may have to "pay" for this development. We continue to monitor the media and will provide additional information as available.

¶16. (C) Action Request: We would appreciate the Department's guidance on a new date for the rescheduled bilateral security consultations, in light of the Azerbaijani leadership's strong interest in putting them back on track as soon as possible. We will follow up with PM and EUR directly.

DERSE